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Speech notes for Mr. D. Savoie
on behalf of the Honourable John Munro
Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs
on the occasion of the 20 anniversary
of the Institute for Northern Studies,
University of Saskatchewan

October 17, 1980.

On behalf of the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development of Canada I am pleased to be here today at the University of Saskatchewan to commemorate with you the 20th anniversary of the creation of the Institute for Northern Studies.

I would like to take this occasion to give homage to one of your colleagues, — a scientist like many of you, — who spent more than 20 years in Canada's far North, living very much the same kind of life as the first settlers of this country, the Indians and the Inuit.

In 1862, Emile Petitot [illegible] America. During this trip he met some Indians and the [illegible] same day began work on a dictionary of 10 Indian dialects which he continued to develop over the years. Petitot immediately began to visit Indian tribes of the North, learning their language, [illegible] studying their customs and making detailed notes in his log book often accompanied by sketches of what he saw. It was at the Notre-Dame-de-Bonne-Espérance Mission, near Fort Good Hope, that he spent the major part of his life as a missionary from 1864 to 1878.

Father Petitot's scientific contribution to the Canadian North is unique, far reaching and of very great value. He contributed to a number of areas of scientific study including geography, anthropology, geology and many others. Father Petitot's geographical work is probably his most important. He drew a map of the North which was published in 1875 by the Société de Géographie de Paris. To compile it,

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I would like to take this occasion to give homage to one of your colleagues, -- a scientist like many of you, -- who spent more than 20 years in Canada's far North living very much the same kind of life as the first inhabitants of this land -- the Indians and the Inuit.

In 1862, Emile Petitot left France and set out for America. During this trip he met some Indians and the very same day began work on a dictionary of 10 Indian dialects which he continued to develop over the years. Petitot immediately began to visit Indian tribes of the North, learning their languages, carefully studying their customs and making detailed notes in his log book often accompanied by sketches of what he saw. It was at the Notre-Dame-de-Bonne-Espérance Mission, near Fort Good Hope, that he spent the major part of his life as a missionary from 1864 to 1878.

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HE MADE MANY SURVEYS OF THE AREA, CHECKING AND CORRECTING THE MAPS MADE BY HIS PREDECESSORS. FATHER PETITOT TRAVELLED BY FOOT MAKING MAPS OF THE NORTH WITH NO INSTRUMENTS EXCEPT A WATCH AND A COMPASS. IN 1883, THE ROYAL GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY OF LONDON AWARDED HIM THE BACK PRIZE IN RECOGNITION OF HIS GREAT CONTRIBUTION TO SCIENCE.

AS YOU KNOW, ENORMOUS CHANGES HAVE OCCURRED IN THE NORTH. ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT IS THE EMPHASIS THAT THE PEOPLE OF THE NORTH NOW PLACE ON HAVING A SAY IN ALL MATTERS AFFECTING THEIR LIVES AND ASPIRATIONS, INCLUDING RESEARCH. THEY KNOW THERE ARE PROBLEMS - SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, ENVIRONMENTAL, ADMINISTRATIVE AND POLITICAL - AND THAT THE ONLY WAY TO BEGIN TO SOLVE THEM IS BY GAINING A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE CAUSES. HOWEVER, THEY ALSO RECOGNIZE THAT THE PRIORITIES FOR SCIENCE IN THE SOUTH ARE NOT NECESSARILY WELL SUITED TO THE NEEDS OF THE NORTH.

IMPORTANT POLITICAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES ARE TAKING PLACE IN THE NORTH. NEW INSTITUTIONS MUST BE CREATED, AND IT IS IN THIS LIGHT THAT WE SHOULD INTERPRET THE DEPARTMENT'S RECENT EFFORTS TOWARD ESTABLISHING A NEW FRAMEWORK GOVERNING SCIENTIFIC ACTIVITIES IN THE NORTH.

SCIENCE IN THE NORTH HAS AN OBLIGATION TO OFFER SOLUTIONS TO THE ACUTE PROBLEMS THAT EXIST THERE. THE DAY-TO-DAY LIFE OF THE CITIZENS IS SO DEEPLY AFFECTED BY THESE MATTERS THAT IT CANNOT VALIDLY BE SAID THAT SCIENCE BELONGS EXCLUSIVELY TO THE SCIENTISTS.

CANADIAN UNIVERSITIES HAVE A VERY IMPORTANT ROLE TO PLAY IN FULFILLING THE OBJECTIVE THAT RESEARCH BE RELEVANT, AND IN FACT SHOULD BENEFIT THE PEOPLE OF THE NORTH. UNIVERSITIES MUST BE PRESENT IN THE NORTH AND THEY WILL HAVE TO ORIENT THEIR EFFORTS TOWARDS A BETTER UNDERSTANDING AND APPRECIATION OF NORTHERN PROBLEMS. SOLUTIONS MUST BE FOUND WHICH ARE ACCEPTABLE TO NORTHERNERS.

SOME WILL SAY IT IS A BIG CHALLENGE. IT IS INDEED. AND I WOULD LIKE TO REFER TO YOU, AS AN EXAMPLE, THE SCIENTIFIC EFFORT OF EMILE PETITOT, WHO WAS FOR MORE THAN A CENTURY UNKNOWN BY CANADIAN SCHOLARS.

I MUST CONGRATULATE YOU, DR. KRISTJANSON, AS PRESIDENT OF THIS UNIVERSITY, AND YOU, DR. BONE, AS DIRECTOR OF THE INSTITUTE, FOR HAVING TAKEN THE INITIATIVE AS A CANADIAN UNIVERSITY TO GIVE PUBLIC RECOGNITION TO THE SCIENTIFIC CONTRIBUTION OF EMILE PETITOT.

I AM PLEASED MR. PRESIDENT, ON BEHALF OF THE MINISTER OF INDIAN AND NORTHERN AFFAIRS, TO GIVE TO THE INSTITUTE FOR NORTHERN STUDIES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN THE COLLECTION OF THE WORKS OF EMILE PETITOT. I AM SURE THAT THIS INSTITUTE AND ITS ASSOCIATES IN NORTHERN RESEARCH WILL CONTINUE IN THE SPIRIT OF EMILE PETITOT - SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH IN THE SERVICE OF THE NORTH!

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